

User's Guide

GCSMENU

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2. All the options must appear on the one screen.



pie in the sky software

Developers of 3D Entertainment Software

INSTALLATION

GCSMENU contains files that go into your main P3DGCS directory. Because the install process is irreversible, we strongly recommend that you back up your entire P3DGCS directory and all its subdirectories before installing GCSMENU.

The GCSMENU files come in a self-extracting archive. The first step is to copy the file GCSMINST.EXE from the floppy disk into your main P3DGCS directory. This is the directory from which you normally start the GCS.

Run GCSMINST.EXE from your main P3DGCS directory. Some of your existing files will be updated. You will be prompted to overwrite certain files. Type "Y" to replace your old files with their newer versions. When the self-extractor is finished, GCSMENU is installed. You may delete GCSMINST.EXE from your hard drive to save disk space.

BUILDING THE EXAMPLE MENU

We have made a fully functional menu as an example. It exists in a new project call GCSMTEST. It has one level. To see this example, use the GCS to 'Make Final' with this project. This will create a regular final game in the directory \GCSMTEST on your hard drive.

To create the menu for the example game, exit to DOS. Call up GCSMENU from the main P3DGCS directory. Select the third choice with your mouse: BUILD MENU. Choose the project GCSMTEST from the red scroll box that comes up.

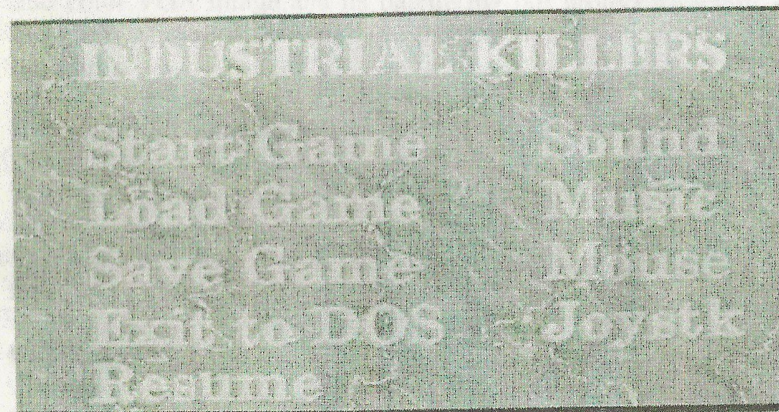
When BUILD MENU is finished, change to the \GCSMTEST directory and type RUNGAME. The menu should come up. Notice that as you move around the options, the sound effects play. Make sure you TURN OFF the MUSIC or you will get a critical

error. Music is not included with this example. Now try starting the game.

GCS MENU BASICS

The basis of your menu is a single 320X200 VGA image. You can modify this image with GCSPAIN (run from the command line) or your favorite paint program. Thus, you have total control over which fonts, patterns, icons, etc. appear on your menus. You only have to follow two rules:

1. The whole image must remain a 320X200 256 color VGA image
2. All the options must appear on the one screen.



Here is an example of menu screen GCSM.VGA.

SELECTING OPTIONS

Like most typical menus, you get around by using the arrow keys. There must be a way for the user to see which option they are on. In DOOM, this is shown with a little skull that moves from option

to option. In other games, the options are highlighted. With GCSMENU, you can use either one of these methods, or both. You can even try a more creative approach. Special effects created with your paint program can add a really creative and original look to your menu.

MAKING YOUR OWN MENU

The first step in making your menu is creating the basic 320X200 main menu screen. You can create this image from scratch or you can import a 256 color GIF, PCX, or BMP image. Exit to DOS. Use `cd` to change to your project directory. Type `\P3DGCS\GCSPAIN`. Do not run GCSPAIN from the icon in the GCS because your image will be saved as a VGR file, not a VGA file, which GCSMENU requires.

Make sure that your image is 320 pixels wide and 200 pixels high. Any other dimension will not work with GCSMENU.

You do not have to use the same palette of 256 colors that the actual game uses. Use any palette you like, but make sure you save the palette. VGA images are not always saved with palettes, so this is critical. Load your image (GCSM.VGA) in GCSPAIN (from the DOS command line), go to the PALETTE MENU, select SAVE PALETTE, name your main menu image palette MAINMENU.PAL

Use your paint program's font tool to add the names of the basic menu command options:

START GAME
LOAD GAME
SAVE GAME
EXIT TO DOS
SOUND TOGGLE
MUSIC TOGGLE
MOUSE TOGGLE

JOYSTICK TOGGLE

You can put in other menu command options, such as RESUME GAME or CREDITS, if you like. You do not have to use these suggested names. You might use icons or a scene like the Wing Commander Bar area, where the bunk room was LOAD GAME.

Save or copy your image and its palette to your project directory. Your project directory is a subdirectory of the engine subdirectory in your main P3DGCS directory.

RUNNING GCSMENU

At this point you should have already saved or copied a 320X200 256 color VGA image and its palette to your project directory. Now it is time to determine how the player will select the various options.

Change to the main directory `cd \P3DGCS`

Start up the menu program `GCSMENU`

You will see a screen with three major functions: DISSECT, EVENT SCHEDULER, and BUILD MENU.

DISSECT

DISSECT asks you to mark specific areas around a command option on your GCSM.VGA. The program turns that marked area into two separate VGA files. One of these images will show that the command option has *NOT* been selected. The other image will show that the command option has been selected. For example, you would mark a rectangular region around the words START GAME on your GCSM.VGA image. When you finish using DISSECT, two VGA files would be created. Both would appear as a cut out of the rectangular area that you marked. One would be called



GCSMOA.VGA and the other would be called GCSMOB.VGA. Right after running DISSECT, these two images will be identical. When the player sees the menu, GCSMOA.VGA will be displayed when START GAME is not selected. GCSMOB.VGA will be displayed when START GAME is selected.



It is up to you to use GCSPAIN to modify GCSMOB.VGA so it looks different from GCSMOA.VGA. Here is an example.

Now when the player selects START GAME, a skull that has been added to GCSMOB.VGA with GCSPAIN will indicate his choice.

You can outline GCSMOB.VGA in a box or lighten the colors so it appears highlighted. The special effects you apply are a matter of personal taste. The bottom line is that GCSMOB.VGA has to be modified so that the player can tell if the corresponding command option is selected.

USING DISSECT

When you click on DISSECT, you be asked to select a project directory. Select the project directory of the game for which you want to create a menu. If this is the first time you have used

DISSECT, you will be prompted to select a .VGA file to use as a background screen. If you have not made a 320X200 256 color image called GCSM.VGA (saved with a palette), then cancel the operation and go back to DOS via the escape key. Follow the procedure described above to create GCSM.VGA by using GCSPAIN from the DOS prompt.

Otherwise, select GCSM.VGA from the scroll box list. After you click on the OK button, you will see your GCSM.VGA file on the screen. In addition, a blue menu bar will be on the top of the screen. Take a look at the HELP section on the pull down menu.

To start marking rectangular regions on your GCSM.VGA file, click on the DISSECT menu item. A list of possible menu commands pop down. Click on 'Begin New Game'. The top of the screen turns yellow and you are asked to pick a point. Then the yellow bar at the top disappears and you are left with your GCSM.VGA image and some numbers in the upper right corner.

The numbers in the upper left hand corner are the screen coordinates of the mouse pointer. These numbers will assist you in marking your regions precisely.

GSCMENU is now waiting for you to pick the first corner of the rectangular region containing the words START GAME. Once you pick the first point of your rectangular region, you will notice that the mouse is creating a box as you move the mouse pointer towards the second point of your rectangle. When you click for the second time, you will have marked the region for START GAME.

If you change your mind, and you don't want to define a region right now, right click to cancel the operation.

After you have marked your rectangular region, you be asked if want a sound to be made when the player selects the menu item corresponding to this rectangular region. If you click on yes, you

can choose a WAV file from the list.

Now that you have marked your rectangle and assigned a sound effect, you are back to the main screen with the blue menu at the top. Your first region should still be on the screen. Use the EDIT pull down command box to clear your region, if you are not satisfied with the results of the DISSECT operation. The EDIT menu also contains the IDENTIFY command which tells you the function that you have assigned to a particular region. You can also set the MENU ORDER. This controls the jumping order when the player is tapping the arrow keys to move around on the menu. Usually, the jumping order goes from top to bottom, but you can change that if you wish.

Please be careful when using the ORDER feature. If you leave out any of your regions or if you click on a region twice, your menu will malfunction.

Repeat the process described above to mark each region. When you get to the TOGGLE regions, you will find that GCSMENU asks for two regions for each toggle command. The first region is for the normal command region, the second region is for the on/off status region. This is required because you want to both select the sound toggle on the screen, and select the on and off options. So, you normally mark the area around the word SOUND, and then you select a small region next to the word SOUND for the ON/OFF pictures.

You will notice that there seem to be some commands missing from the DISSECT pull down menu command. For example, there is no EXIT TO DOS, RESUME GAME, or SHOW CREDITS. That is what EVENT COMMANDS are for. To retain maximum flexibility, programmed events can also take place when the player chooses menu items. Events are programmed by the EVENT SCHEDULER. This was one of your options when you first started GCSMENU.

In DISSECT, when you want to mark the region for the EXIT TO DOS command, click on EVENT 10 and specify that region. You must remember to schedule EVENT 10 as FORCE DOS EXIT when you use the EVENT SCHEDULER.

If you want credits, or shareware "BUY THIS" screens, you can specify those as EVENTS 11 and 12. When you are using the EVENT SCHEDULER later, you can define what you want to happen when the player selects either of those commands from the menu.

When you are finished marking all your regions using DISSECT, click on the FINISHED menu item. This is when your little VGA files (GCSM??VGA) are created. If you quit without selecting FINISH, your small VGA files (GCSM??VGA) will not be made and your menu will not work. Likewise, the regions that you have marked will not be saved. FINISH also wipes out any previously edited small VGA files (GCSM??VGA) that are in the directory.

EDITING THE GCSM??VGA FILES

Immediately after the completing the DISSECT operation, exit to DOS with the ESC key. Call up GCSPAIN from the DOS prompt. Make sure that you are loading the small VGA images (GCSM??VGA) in your project directory. Edit each GCSM?B.VGA files in a way that will show that its corresponding region has been selected by the player. You can simply outline the images, highlight the letters, or you can apply fancy special effects and artwork. Be sure to save each of the images. Be aware that your originals will be overwritten.

DISSECT saves your CCSM??VGA files without palettes. When you load these images in GCSPAIN, the colors of the images will look psychedelic. Go to the PALETTE ICON in GCSPAIN. Select LOAD PALETTE. Click on MAINMENU.PAL. This is the palette for the GCSM.VGA that you saved at the beginning of these

directions. When GCSPAINTE prompts you to MATCH PALETTES, select NO. If you didn't save MAINMENU.PAL earlier, simply load GCSM.VGA first, then load your GCSM?? VGA image. The palette holds over from image to image in GCSPAINTE so the colors of your small VGA images will look as they should.

Remember your toggle commands (SOUND ON/OFF, MUSIC ON/OFF, MOUSE ON/OFF, & JOYSTICK ON/OFF) use two regions a piece. For example, if dissected region 6 was designated for the sound command, region 7 would correspond to the on/off region for sound. Edit GCSM7A.VGA to show the word "OFF". Edit GCSM7B.VGA to show the word "ON". Or, you might want to show the same information with a loudspeaker icon. Just remember that the toggle commands use two dissected regions.

THE EVENT SCHEDULER

This part of GCSMENU allows you to program events or sequences of events. These events can be still screen images, FLI animations, sound effects, music, or menu commands. When you select EVENT SCHEDULER, you will see something that looks like a tape player. The arrow buttons are to move to different events. The ACTION buttons edit the sequence of actions that make up each event. Here are the various actions that you can add to an event...

FADE OUT VGA

This action fades the current screen to black.

FADE IN VGA

This action turns the screen to black, then gradually fades in your 320X200 VGA image. Remember that your VGA file must be saved with a palette.

SHOW FLI FILE

This action displays a 320X200 FLI animation file. This is great for the introduction of your game or for intermissions during game play.

RETURN TO MENU

This action returns control of the event to the game menu.

DISSOLVE IN VGA

This action turns the screen black, then dissolves in a 320X200 VGA file of your choice. Your VGA file must be saved with its own palette of 256 colors.

DISSOLVE OUT VGA

This action dissolves a 320X200 VGA file to pure black.

PLAY MIDI FILE

Use this action in EVENT #0 to start your menu music. This action will not crash the program if the play does not have a SoundBlaster compatible sound card. The MID music file must be in your project directory, however.

RESUME GAME

If the player exits your game with the ESC key, the game can be restarted at the same point. In addition, if you stop the game by putting a number like 129 in UNIVERSE REGISTER 127, the game can also be restarted. In either case, the RESUME GAME action restarts the game.

SLIDE IN VGA

This action turns the screen black. A 320X200 VGA image slides in. Remember, your big VGA images have to be saved with their palettes of 256 colors.

SLIDE OUT VGA

This action slides blackness across the current screen.

PLAY WAV SOUND EFFECT

This action plays the WAV sound effect that you specify. Your WAV file must be in your project directory.

FORCE DOS EXIT

This action ends the game and the menu. This action must be placed in at least one of your events. The player must have a way to quit and return to DOS.

SPECIAL EVENT NUMBERS

EVENT #0

This event is executed before the menu starts up. This is often used to turn on midi music and to display title and credit screens. If you leave EVENT #0 blank, the menu is the first thing that the player sees.

EVENT #1 This event is triggered when the player is killed.

EVENT #10

This is the event that runs when the player hits the ESC key while in the main menu. Usually, this is the event that FORCES DOS

EXIT. However, you could have the ESC key RESUME GAME.

DELAY

After adding an event, GCSMENU asks you to set the duration of the delay. The delay starts immediately after putting up the picture. The delay is cut short when the player hits the enter key. If the player hits the ESC key, the reset of the actions in the current event will be bypassed.

EXITING THE EVENT SCHEDULER

When you have finished scheduling your events, click on the EXIT button. Select YES to exit. Select YES to save your new event settings. You will then be returned to the main GCSMENU screen.

EXAMPLE EVENTS

For the simplest menu, you would specify one event: EVENT #10. You would add one action to that event: FORCE DOS EXIT. When the player selected that region on your menu screen, EVENT #10 would be triggered and the player would be put back in DOS. This, of course, assumes that you had used DISSECT earlier and marked a region of the menu screen for EVENT #10.

In most cases, you will want to program several events. In each event, you will probably want several actions. For example, in a shareware game, you might really want to display a screen with ordering information on it when the player exits your game. Use GCSPAIN to make a 320X200 256 color VGA image with your sales pitch written on it. Save the image with a palette. Instead of making EVENT #10 pop the player directly to DOS, add an action that displays your sales pitch image. Add a FADE OUT action. Then add the FORCE DOS EXIT action. All these actions would be part of EVENT #10.

For a credits screen, you would want to do basically the same thing. Use GCSPAIN to make a 320X200 256 color VGA image with your credits written on it. Save the image with a palette. Use DISSECT to mark a region on your GCSM.VGA for EVENT #11. Edit GCSM11B.VGA with GCSPAIN. Use the EVENT SCHEDULER to add your VGA credits image to EVENT #11.

BUILDING YOUR FINAL MENU

Make sure that you have edited your GCSM?B.VGA files in your project directory before building your menu. If you forget to do this, your menu will not show which menu command is selected. The menu will appear to be non-functional.

Do not attempt to build a menu if you have not MADE FINAL with your game. GCSMENU assumes that the target final directory is in the root of your hard drive. It will try to copy files there when you build the menu.

Build your menu by clicking on BUILD MENU from the main GCSMENU screen. Choose your project from the scroll box list. GCSMENU will copy all the VGA, MID, WAV, and other necessary files from your project directory to your final game directory. In your final game directory, you will find files called RUNGAME.EXE and EVENTMGR.EXE. When you type RUNGAME, your menu will start up.

CUSTOMIZING YOUR MENU

CUSTOMIZE SAVE AND LOAD

You can customize the screens that the player sees, when he or she selects LOAD GAME or SAVE GAME from your menu. GCSMLOAD.VGA is the 320X200 VGA image that is the background image that the player sees when LOAD GAME is selected. Similarly, GCSMSAVE.VGA is the 320X200 VGA

background image that the player sees when SAVE GAME is selected. In addition, there are two mouse pointers, GCSM_LDP.VGA for the LOAD GAME screen and GCSM_SVP.VGA for the SAVE GAME screen. You can customize the look of these pointers using GCSPAIN. Do not change the size of these pointer images. Both files must remain 60X16 pixels or the menu will fail.

You can control the color used by the letters that GCSMENU uses for SAVE/LOAD screens. LD_COLOR.DAT is a tiny text file that sets the colors for the letters on the LOAD screen. Use a text editor to look at the file. There are two numbers, separated by a comma. The first number is the color number of the letters. The second number is the color number of the space around the letters. Color numbers refer to different colors in different palettes. You can see what color the number refers to by loading an image that uses that palette in GCSPAIN. Edit the numbers in the LD_COLOR.DAT file to suit your tastes. SV_COLOR.DAT is the tiny text file that defines the colors for the letters and background for the SAVE screen. The same procedure applies to this file.

All the VGA and DAT files have default versions in the main P3DGCS directory. If you do not make your own versions of these files in your project directory, GCSMENU will automatically use these default files. To customize the default files, copy them from the P3DGCS main directory to your project directory. Make your modifications to the copies of the files in your project directory. When you build your menu, GCSMENU will copy these modified files from your project directory to your final game directory.

CUSTOMIZING TITLE SCREENS & INTRO ANIMATIONS

When the player types RUNGAME, EVENT #0 is the first thing that takes place. If you haven't put anything in EVENT #0, the main menu screen immediately appears. But, if you want the player to see something before he or she sees the menu screen, you have to

use the EVENT SCHEDULER to put actions in EVENT #0. This feature is great for title screens, advertising, and introductory animations. Just remember that your title screen images have to be 320X200 VGA files with saved palettes.

CUSTOMIZING DEATH SCENES

When the game is started with RUNGAME and the player is killed, the game stops and EVENT #1 is run by GCSMENU. If there are no actions in EVENT #1, the player is sent to the DOS prompt and the game is over. Use the EVENT SCHEDULER to program actions such as a 320X200 VGA death scene. If you want the user to return to the menu rather than exiting to DOS, add the RETURN TO MENU action in EVENT #1.

If you have special ways of killing the player with ANIMATED OBJECT COMMANDS (see your GCS manual), you can put a value that is less than 128 in UNIVERSE REGISTER 127. The EVENT MANAGER interprets this value as an event. You can put actions in this event like screens telling the player that he has drown in quicksand or that he has been vaporized by defense field.

CUSTOMIZING HAPPY ENDING SCENES

Your game can end on a victorious note too. The game play stops when you put a number bigger than 128 in UNIVERSE REGISTER 127. Read your GCS manual for instructions on how to do this. GCSMENU interprets the number in UNIVERSE REGISTER 127 as an event number. Use the EVENT SCHEDULER to program actions that will show the successful completion of your game. For example, if the player finally reaches the "Door of Freedom" in the final level of your game, he crosses a platform. This sets UNIVERSE REGISTER 127 to 130. The game play stops. Instead of returning to the menu, GCSMENU runs EVENT #130. In EVENT #130, you could have congratulation screens, victory music, or a FLI animation. The last action in EVENT #130 would

be FORCE DOS EXIT. If you want the player to return to the menu after winning the game, simply program the last action in EVENT #130 to be RESUME GAME. You are not limited to one happy ending for your game. The EVENT MANAGER can handle up to 128 happy endings.

EDITING YOUR EXISTING DISSECTED REGIONS

You can use the EDIT menu while in DISSECT mode to make changes in your marked regions. However, all your GCSM??VGA files will be erased. If you only want to make changes to one or two regions, you should make back up copies of your GCSM??VGA files in your project directory before you use DISSECT again. Be very careful not to restore those GCSM??VGA images to regions that have been changed. Only restore back up GCSM??VGA's to regions that have remained untouched.

STARTING OVER FROM SCRATCH

If you want to make significant changes in your main menu screen, you will have to go through the DISSECT process again. To start from scratch, delete the file GCSM.DAT in your project directory. This will clear out the GCSM.VGA name and all the data about your dissected regions. When you run DISSECT again, GCSMENU will ask you for a GCSM.VGA file name. Then, you can start marking new regions. You can delete all the GCSM??VGA files too, but they will be overwritten anyway when you finish using DISSECT.

If you want to clear all the events that you have specified in your game, delete GCSMEVNT.CRD from your project directory. This will get rid of all the EVENT SCHEDULER data. The next time you use EVENT SCHEDULER, you will be starting fresh.